

# personal effect

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Our visit to leading law firm Taylor Wessing's new City offices prompted feelings from the start. On arrival at the tenth floor reception one has an immediate sense of the firm's brand values. As soon as the lift doors part, one is confronted with dramatic effect – subtly achieved. A series of

photographic portraits by Billy & Hells that is evocative and profound. Pictures of people. You feel Taylor Wessing's values. Corporate identity expressed as a feeling.

Tim Grant, Taylor Wessing's Head of Facilities, quickly underscores what we sense we already know – these are people people. 'The first of our key objectives in our move to New Street Square was to create a place for people. What's more, this is a place where we promote equality of





▶▶▶▶ space for everyone. This building expresses the core Taylor Wessing brand values.’

Helen Berresford, Head of ID:SR (Sheppard Robson’s Interiors Division), confirms the point. ‘We held in-depth briefings across the whole of Taylor Wessing, from top to bottom. The strong overview was that this is, to an unusual degree, a very people oriented company. It’s not lip

service, it’s absolutely true. The vision comes from the top of a family oriented business. Critically, Taylor Wessing understand the ‘patterns’ and know how to maintain people focus despite the context of the business and against the backdrop of considerable growth.’

Taylor Wessing’s Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Croucher explains that the firm’s

success and growth were important motivators behind the move. ‘We had outgrown our previous office and as a firm we have big aspirations for the future. We’re known as a European firm, but actually we have offices in key locations across China and the Middle East, as well as seven throughout Germany, France and Brussels. We’re a full service firm and place a strong emphasis on providing our clients with an unparalleled level of service, advice and expertise. It was clear from the outset that our new building should reflect our commitment to be a forward-looking firm with big plans for the future. We wanted the office to say something about us as a firm, to look beyond the conventional and attract new clients, whilst also strengthening our existing client relationships. The design reflects our emphasis on providing clients with an excellent standard of service in any efficient and timely manner and our own teams with a high quality and creative environment in which to flourish. The use of space was very important – we’ve doubled our meeting space, have extensive training facilities and the highest quality client entertainment space. In line with our environmental stance – we were the first law firm to be awarded the BSI ISO ▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶





▶▶▶140001 Certification – we've introduced electronic data storage across the firm. Our IT systems are future proofed and we've allowed for future growth. Beyond these valuable gains though, the critical success is that across the firm we're connected.'

The way that ID:SR delivered a clearly successful result for a happy client is based squarely on time invested in developing the brief. A steering group of key stakeholders from Taylor Wessing and ID:SR designers led a two-way traffic of communication throughout not just the briefing, but the design and fit-out processes too. Decisions were linked back to the business drivers and encouraged new workplace strategies and concepts that ultimately empowered both the client and the design team. ID:SR developed the brief as always – utilising robust empirical analysis of current and future occupancy levels as well as focusing on future space standards. This may be a place that lifts the spirits, but the foundations are rooted in pragmatic and considered analysis of hard business needs. The 'connection' can't be achieved without all the elements being synchronised.

Helen explains how the process developed. 'By fully exploring how Taylor Wessing might use the new facility extended the design possibilities. Take, for example, the client areas; we designed the space a little bit like a Chinese box to take full advantage of the client and staff entertainment in the area, both at maximum capacity and on a day to day mode. In the first few weeks, when most organisations would be solely focusing on getting the building functioning on a day-to-day basis and only starting to think about the possibilities of their new premises, Taylor Wessing held a party for 300 clients that made use of every corner of the facility!

'With every client we strive to offer the best possible service. However, if the client encourages engagement then a real relationship can develop. In such cases we can fully challenge the design process to create a really tailored solution that fits the character and aspiration of an organisation. Taylor Wessing most definitely challenged us and reaped the rewards.'

An important part of that process is ensuring that the interior design goes beyond a sympathetic alignment with the building's architecture. As Helen comments, at Taylor Wessing the design stretches to create something that is wholly connected. 'We were keen to really sculpt the space from the original building and engage with▶▶▶▶

## case study



►►► the architectural elements so the interior experience is holistic and fully integrated.'

The finished result is a design which embraces the base build, stresses the collaborative and the social by subtle differentiation from workspace – and takes the integrated whole to a different level by creating something that's rich and interesting.

Tim explains what that 'different level' means to the people of Taylor Wessing. 'Once we had the building we interviewed six architectural practices to deliver the interior. I have no doubt that the other five architects would have done a good job – but the result would have looked like a law firm. ID:SR pushed us further in terms of design. There were moments when we were nervous, but we knew we wanted something great, something different. What we have is a major statement about who we are, what we believe in, where we're going.'

We didn't spend much time on tenth floor. Before long we were whisked off to the ninth

floor, which has at its heart a wonderful space for people to talk to each other. Rarely has the description 'staff restaurant' seemed so inadequate, but that's what it is. That's when it's not turned into an entertainment area for clients. Complete with spectacular views, and elegantly underplayed design details, this is a space that builds on and complements the 'arrival experience' created by the tenth floor reception. 'There's a sense of character,' comments Helen, 'a space to be. It's the best but it's not lavish. There's differentiation from work area by using a dark ceiling detail, beautiful Tom Dixon lights, and strong colours on the soft seating. Of course, it takes pressure off the meeting rooms, but it taps into the psychology of people – a place where people want to be. There's a strong ambience.'

In terms of maximising the potential of a space in its effectiveness and use, communicating the core values of people focus and mutual trust, the evidence is plain.

This is more than just a lawyers' office, but a place where Taylor Wessing are marked out as different from their peers.

Innovative design techniques are utilised throughout 5 New Street Square – a good example is found in the design of the main office areas. In order to allow the support spaces to operate as the heart of the office floor, fee earners offices are 5m deep (instead of the typical 6m). Maximising future flexibility in concert with situating meeting rooms in the open plan, the design creates a real, as well as a strong sense, of space in what can often feel a slightly claustrophobic or inefficient area in average law firms. Aided and abetted by fully glazed fronts to the offices, the whole floor is filled with light while views are uninterrupted.

A BREEAM 'excellent' building, the design incorporates strong natural elements to reinforce its sustainable feel. Selecting a palette of natural materials such as timber, glass and amber, ID:SR have created a space that people can be connected with. 'We used beautiful natural and organic materials, pure materials to help create a sense of place that's not about just being decorative,' notes Helen. 'We reflected and enhanced the natural timber and stone used in the base build. The tree manifestations on the glazing reflect this as well as blending with natural light to provide a luminous veil or skin.'

There is a connection throughout this space, and it's palpable. Thoughtful, understated and innovative – this is more than simply reflecting a client's brand, it's about understanding Taylor Wessing's heart. A place that lifts the spirits indeed ●

## essential ingredients

Client:	• Taylor Wessing
Design:	• ID:SR Sheppard Robson 020 7504 1700
Systems Furniture:	• Ergonom 020 7323 2325
Carpets:	• Shaw 020 7490 4006
Task Seating:	• Herman Miller 0845 226 7202
Partitioning:	• Optima 01494 492600
Meeting Furniture:	• Vitra 020 7608 6200 Wilkhahn 020 7324 2900
Photography:	• Richard Waite